Instructions for book exams in computer science and interactive technology

Preparing for the exam

Make sure that you have enough time for reading and going through the book: a textbook cannot be mastered in just a couple of hours or days. The time needed depends, of course, on your starting knowledge and reading rate, but as a general guideline, reserve for preparing at least 20 hours ×number of credit points given by the book.

It helps if you make a reading plan. Based on the number of pages in the book, make a plan for how many pages or chapters to read per day, taking into account your personal way of studying and reading speed. Leave some slack in the plan, so that unexpected sickness or other force majeure doesn't spoil the plan.

Reading a book

For understanding what you read you must process the information. How this is done depends on your personal style. It is recommended to start by getting an overview of the book by scanning through it, observing its outline. Important elements here are the table of contents, preface, introduction and conclusions (if your book has such parts). They will guide you in finding and selecting the essential content. After you are familiar with the structure of the book it is also easier to get started with actual reading.

When you read the book it is good to take notes. If you own the book you can also use underlining and notes in the margins instead of separate notes. Taking notes slows down the reading process, but reviewing what you have read becomes easier with your notes. It might be sufficient to take notes of only the difficult parts of the book. Taking notes by writing them down may also help in remembering the content better.

You can make for your own use summaries that contain the central issues of the text. If some of your fellow students are taking the exam at the same time, it might be helpful to create a study circle where each student is assigned primary responsibility for some parts of the book. Each person could then prepare summaries to be shared within the circle. This reduces the workload, and discussing the text and summaries together helps in learning.

Pay attention to external factors. A good study plan does not help unless you have a location where you can concentrate on studying. A good location depends on your personal preferences. Some prefer the silence of a library, for others a kitchen table works better.

Answering the problems in the exam

If you have prepared well, the actual exam will be less stressful. Read the problems carefully. Plan the structure of your answer before you write it down. Start with the easiest problem; once you've done with the first one, the stress will become smaller.

Instructions in a nutshell

1. Remember that a book exam requires as much effort as other courses, even though it does not include time consuming lectures, weekly assignments or project work.
2. Make it clear to yourself what are the essential points of the book, both before and after reading it.
3. Take notes and make summaries; *understand* what you have read.
4. After reading the book, go through it again using your notes.
5. The exam answers should be based on the information that is in the book. Answers based on common knowledge will not give you full marks.